

News

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Health Department releases risk factors study

MOUNT CLEMENS, Mich. – Macomb County residents smoke too much and many have problems with high blood pressure and cholesterol levels, according to a new risk factor study by the Macomb County Health Department.

“These important risk factors increase the incidence of heart disease, stroke and some forms of cancer,” said Dr. Kevin Lokar, Macomb County medical director. “Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of disease and death in the U.S. and in Macomb County, where one in every four adults continues to smoke.”

The 2005 Macomb County Adult and Child Behavioral Risk Factor Survey shows that 24.4 percent of residents said they were current smokers— about the same as the state average, but higher than the national average.

More than 25 percent of county residents reported problems with high blood pressure and nearly one-third said they had high cholesterol, according to the study. Although the rates for Macomb County residents were not significantly different than state and national averages, there are still too many residents affected, Lokar said.

– more –

Page 2

About 40 percent of Macomb County residents were categorized as “overweight” – about the same as state and national averages. Nearly a quarter of county residents were “obese” – slightly less than the state and national averages.

Macomb County residents consider themselves to be in generally good physical and mental health and are more likely to take preventive health measures such as frequent disease screening and vaccinations. County residents also have lower incidences of diabetes and asthma than either the state or national averages.

The recently released survey is conducted every three years, and is used by local decision-makers to better allocate their communities’ health-related resources, said Tom Kalkofen, director of the Macomb County Health Department.

“We assess various community health factors, like infant mortality and communicable diseases on an ongoing basis,” Kalkofen said. “Other factors, like risk behaviors, are best reviewed using periodic surveys. Among the areas we examined in this survey were adult and child health status, health conditions, access to health care, preventive care and health screening services.”

The survey indicated that 13 percent of adults did not have any health care coverage. This is somewhat higher than the 11.2 percent recorded in 2002 and up considerably from 5.8 percent recorded in the 1999 survey. Nearly all children in Macomb County (96.8 percent) had some kind of health care coverage. This is slightly less than the 97.7 percent recorded in the 1996 Macomb County survey.

“Data from the surveys offers important information that we use in responding to the health needs of Macomb County residents,” said Paul Gielegem, chair of the Health

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Services Committee of the Macomb County Board of Commissioners. “This includes identifying segments of the population that are at greater risk and guiding resource allocation and program decision-making within the community.”

About the survey

The survey was designed and conducted by Clearwater Research Inc. with the support and input from the Board of Commissioners, the Southeast Michigan Health Association Center for Population Health and other health agencies and county departments. The survey was based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System standards and protocols. Clearwater consulted with the Macomb County Health Department and the Southeastern Michigan Health Association on methodology for collecting data from 1,116 adult residents of Macomb County aged 18 and older. Adults also were surveyed to obtain information about 214 children aged 5-15 years. Data was collected from June 6 through Sept. 12, 2005.

Data from the 1999 and 2002 Macomb County Behavioral Risk Factor surveys can be viewed at www.macombcountymi.gov/publichealth. A copy of the 2005 Macomb County Behavioral Risk Factor Survey Executive Summary can be obtained by calling the Macomb County Health Department at 586-469-5699.

About the Macomb County Health Department

Serving Macomb County residents for more than 50 years, the Health Department and its many programs are provided as a public service by the Macomb County Board of Commissioners. The Health Department also receives funding from the state of Michigan and the federal government.

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